

# Census



Population



CANADA'S POPULATION  
FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN

Canada



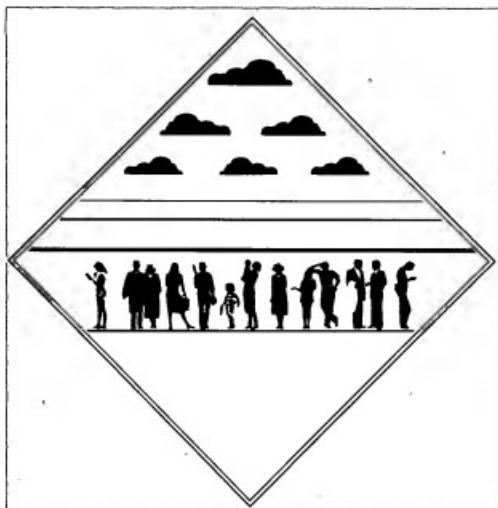
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1986 Census of Canada

## CANADA'S POPULATION FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN



by Rick Mitchell

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## PREFACE

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**T**he 1986 Census of Canada provided, as did all the previous censuses, a rich source of information on individual, family and household characteristics of Canadians. The census data allow individual researchers as well as academic, business, cultural, social and governmental organizations to undertake in-depth enquiries and analyses on those social issues which interest and concern them.

This study is part of the 1986 Focus on Canada Series. The series is a modest effort by Statistics Canada to provide overviews of a wide variety of subjects on which the 1986 Census collected information. The studies have been written by experts, both inside and outside Statistics Canada, in non-technical language supported by simple tables and attractive charts. The topics include demographic characteristics (population, families, farmers, youth, seniors, the disabled), socio-cultural characteristics (ethnicity, language, education), and economic characteristics (women in the labour force, affordability of housing, occupational trends, employment income, family income).

The present study on "Canada's Population from Ocean to Ocean" was authored by Rick Mitchell of Geography Division in Statistics Canada.

I would like to express my appreciation to the authors, to the reviewers and to the staff of the Bureau involved in managing and producing this series.

We hope that the studies in Focus on Canada Series will not only provide Canadians with very useful information on various facets of the Canadian society, but will also be an inducement for them to undertake further research on the topics.

Ivan P. Fellegi  
Chief Statistician of Canada



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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	Page
<b>HIGHLIGHTS</b> .....	7
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	9
<b>Chapter 1.</b> Population Change and Regional Distribution in the Twentieth Century .....	11
National Population Change Since Confederation .....	13
The Westward Shift .....	13
Provincial Population Changes Since 1971 .....	15
"North of the Border" .....	16
<b>Chapter 2.</b> Subprovincial Population Distribution and Change in Canada .....	19
Big City or Small Town? .....	19
City Folks and Country Folks .....	20
<b>Chapter 3.</b> Canada's Major Metropolitan Areas and Municipalities .....	25
Census Metropolitan Areas .....	25
Municipalities .....	25
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	31
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	
1. Population Growth in Canada, 1871-1986 .....	13
2. Population Change by Province and Territory in Canada, 1971-1986 .....	15
3. Geographic Distribution of the Canadian Population Within Selected Parallels of Latitude and Distances from the Canada-United States Border, 1971-1986 .....	16
4. Population Change by Municipal Size Group, Canada, 1981 and 1986 .....	19
5. Population Change by Urban Size Group, Canada, 1981 and 1986 .....	20
6. Urban and Rural Population Composition, Inside and Outside CMAs and CAs, Canada, 1981 and 1986 .....	21
7. Census Metropolitan Areas, Population, Canada, 1981 and 1986 .....	26
8. Canada's Twenty-five Largest Municipalities, Population, 1986 .....	28
<b>LIST OF CHARTS</b>	
1. Regional Population Distribution in Canada, 1901-1986 .....	4
2. Urban-Rural Population Composition of Canada, 1871-1986 .....	22
3. Urban-Rural Population Composition, for Canada, Provinces and Territories, 1986 .....	23
4. Canada's Urban-Rural Population Composition, Inside and Outside CMAs and CAs, 1986 .....	24
5. Percentage Population Distribution, Inside and Outside CMAs and CAs, Canada, 1986 .....	27
6. Major Municipal Population Winners, Canada, 1981-1986 .....	29
7. Major Municipal Population Losers, Canada, 1981-1986 .....	30

MAP: Population Distribution, 1986, Showing Selected Parallels of Latitude and Distances from the  
Canada-United States Border



## HIGHLIGHTS

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- The population of Canada grew by 4.2% (to 25,354,064) between 1981 and 1986. This was, however, the lowest intercensal rate of growth since Confederation, reflecting a continuation of the slowing of Canada's population growth that began after the post-World War II baby boom.
- With a rate of 14.2%, the Northwest Territories experienced the highest percentage population growth between 1981 and 1986, followed by Alberta (6.1%) and Ontario (5.7%). The lowest growth rate occurred in Newfoundland, where the population grew by only 0.1%. The greatest absolute population growth occurred in Ontario (+488,408) and the smallest occurred in Yukon (+351).
- Almost three-quarters (72.0%) of Canada's population lived within 150 km of the Canada-United States border in 1986. Although the population "north of 60°" increased by 43.0% between 1971 and 1986, its share of Canada's total population remained unchanged at 0.3%.
- In 1986, almost one-half (49.2%) of all Canadians lived in municipalities of 50,000 people or more. On the other hand, only 20.5% of Canadians lived in municipalities of less than 5,000 inhabitants, and the population living in these municipalities declined by 2.0% between 1981 and 1986.
- In 1986, over three-quarters (76.5%) of Canadians lived in urban areas; this proportion increased slightly (0.8%) between 1981 and 1986.
- Between 1971 and 1981, a reversal was observed in the historic trend towards an increasingly urban population. However, during the 1981 and 1986 period, the historic trend was renewed suggesting that perhaps the urban-rural composition in Canada is merely stabilizing.
- Ontario was the most urbanized (82.1%) of Canada's provinces and territories in 1986, followed by Alberta at 79.4%. Prince Edward Island was the least urbanized (38.1%).
- Almost four-fifths (78.2%) of the growth of Canada's rural population between 1981 and 1986 occurred within the rural areas of census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations.
- In 1986, over one-third (37.0%) of Canada's population lived in the five most populous CMAs, i.e. Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver, Ottawa-Hull and Edmonton.
- Of Canada's large municipalities, the strongest growth occurred in the suburban and fringe municipalities surrounding Canada's major urban centres whereas those municipalities with declining population tended to be in the core areas of major urban centres and in resource-based or one industry-based regions.



## INTRODUCTION

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**W**hen Jean Talon, the Great Intendant of New France, initiated the first modern census in 1666, 3,215 people lived in the area we now know as the province of Quebec. In 1986, 320 years later, the 16th Census of Canada counted 25,354,064 people from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west and north to the Arctic Ocean.

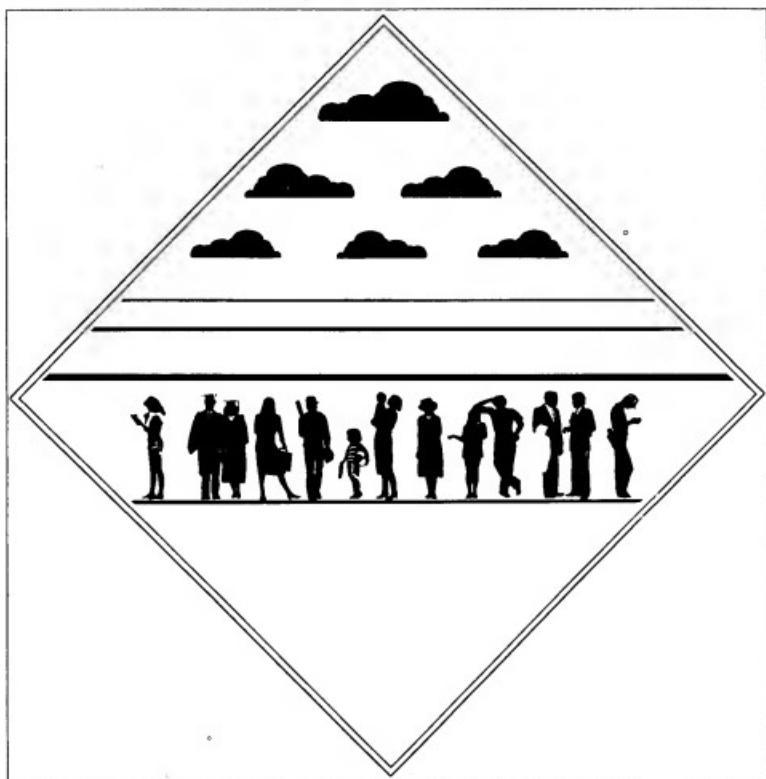
With a land area in excess of 9.2 million square kilometres, Canada is the world's second largest country. However, with a population of just over 25 million people, Canada's population density is a mere 2.8 persons per square kilometre, thus ranking her in 197th place of the 211 countries reported in the 1985 United Nations Demographic Yearbook. The world population density was reported as being 36 persons per square kilometre.

Data from the 1986 Census of Canada reveal much about where Canadians live and how patterns of population have continued to change even since the 1981 Census. Our analysis will begin by looking at regional and provincial population distributions and go on to examine subprovincial distributions, the concentration of Canadian population near the United States border, changes in the urban-rural composition of the population and changes in the population of Canada's metropolitan areas and municipalities.



POPULATION CHANGE AND REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION IN  
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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## POPULATION CHANGE AND REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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### National Population Change Since Confederation

When Canada conducted its first national census in 1871, its population was only 3,689,257. Since then, Canada's population has continued to grow until, in 1986, the population of the nation stood at 25,354,064. As Table 1 illustrates, between 1981 and 1986, Canada's population grew by 1,010,883 people or 4.2%. This represents the lowest intercensal growth rate recorded since Confederation.

Although Canada's population continued to increase, its average annual rate of growth between 1981 and 1986 slowed to only 0.8% compared with an average annual growth rate of 2.8% in the five-year period from 1951 to 1956. This reflects a continuation in the slow-down in the growth of Canada's population that began following the post-World War II baby-boom years. Much of this decline may be attributed to a declining birth rate.

### The Westward Shift

The proportion of Canada's population living in the western part of the nation has continued to grow since the opening for settlement of the Prairie provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta) in the first two decades of this century.

In 1901, the population of the **Atlantic provinces** (Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland after 1949) was 893,953 or 16.6% of the nation's population. By 1986, this population had grown to 2,278,616 but represented only 9.0% of Canada's total population.

During the same period, **Quebec's** population grew from 1,648,898 to 6,540,276 but its share of Canada's total population fell by almost 5% (from 30.7% to 25.8%). While **Ontario's** population grew from 2,182,947 in 1901 to 9,113,515 in 1986, its

**Table 1.** Population Growth in Canada, 1871-1986

Year	Total population	Population increase	% Increase	Average annual growth rate
1871	3,689,257			
1881	4,324,810	635,553	17.2	1.6
1891	4,833,239	508,429	11.8	1.1
1901	5,371,315	538,076	11.1	1.1
1911	7,206,643	1,835,328	34.2	3.0
1921	8,787,949	1,581,306	21.9	2.0
1931	10,376,786	1,588,837	18.1	1.7
1941	11,506,655	1,129,869	10.9	1.0
1951 <sup>1</sup>	14,009,429	2,502,774	21.8	1.7
1956	16,080,791	2,071,362	14.8	2.8
1961	18,238,247	2,157,456	13.4	2.5
1966	20,014,880	1,776,633	9.7	1.9
1971	21,568,311	1,553,431	7.8	1.5
1976	22,992,604	1,424,293	6.6	1.4
1981	24,343,181	1,350,577	5.9	1.2
1986	25,354,064 <sup>2</sup>	1,010,883	4.2	0.8

<sup>1</sup> Includes Newfoundland for the first time.

<sup>2</sup> Includes data for incompletely enumerated Indian reserves and Indian settlements.

**Source:**

1871 to 1986 Censuses of Canada.

share of the total population also declined by almost 5%, from 40.6% to 35.9%.

The most dramatic changes in population have occurred in the **Western provinces** (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia). In 1901, only 598,169 people lived west of the Ontario-Manitoba border, accounting for 11.1% of the nation's population. By 1986, this share had risen to 29% or 7,345,915 people.

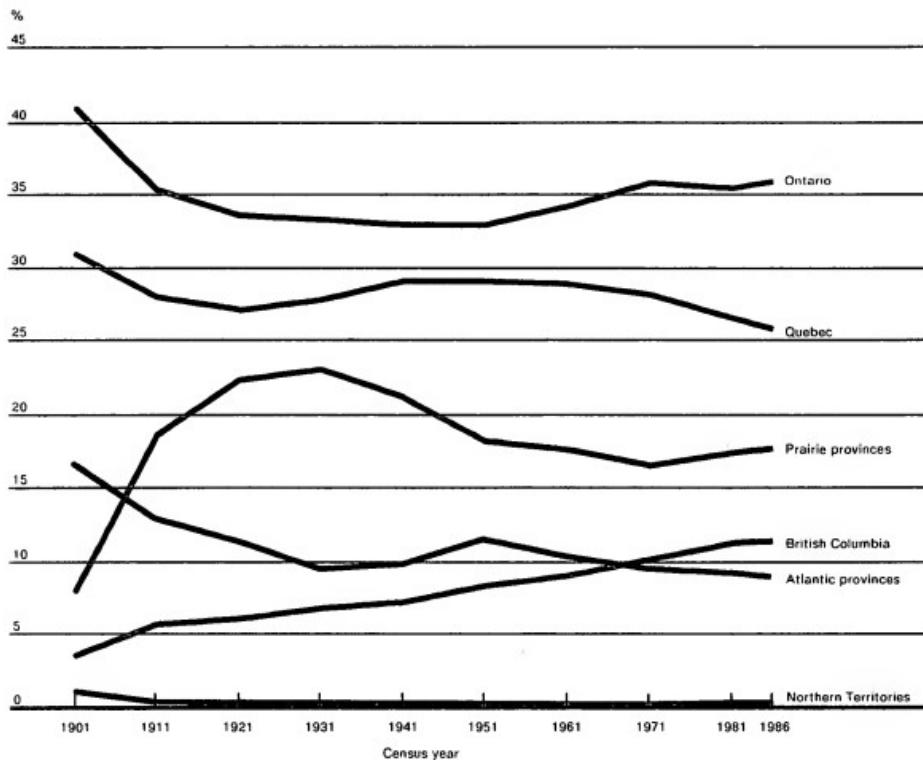
After quickly rising from 7.8% in 1901 to 22.2% in 1921 during the opening of the West, the **Prairie provinces'** (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta) share of the nation's population had declined to 21.0% by the time the Great Depression of the 1930s

was over. Between 1941 and 1961, this share continued to fall to 17.5% and remained relatively stable at between 16.4% and 17.6% during the 1961-1986 period. In 1986, 4,456,708 people (17.6%) lived in the Prairie provinces.

Only **British Columbia** has shown a continuous increase in its share of Canada's population, increasing from 3.3% (or 178,657 people) in 1901 to 11.4% (2,889,207 people) in 1986.

Since 1901, three years after the Gold Rush of 1898, when 0.9% of Canada's population lived in the **Northern territories** (Yukon and Northwest Territories), its share has dropped to as low as 0.1% in 1921 and 1931 and has only gone as high as 0.3% in 1986.

Chart 1. Regional Population Distribution in Canada, 1901-1986



Note: Atlantic provinces include Newfoundland from 1951.

Source:

1901 to 1986 Censuses of Canada.

## Provincial Population Changes Since 1971

An examination of provincial population changes between 1971 and 1986 reveals interesting variations within and between regions (see Table 2). What follows highlights specific variations during this period.

The Atlantic provinces, in general, experienced continued declines in population growth between 1971 and 1986. Newfoundland's growth dwindled to a mere 668 people or 0.1% between 1981 and 1986 whereas in the 1971-1976 period, its population growth (6.8%) was above the national average (6.6%). Both Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick have experienced continued declines in the growth rates of their population since 1971.

Among the Atlantic provinces, only Nova Scotia experienced an increase in population growth, albeit modest. Between 1976 and 1981, Nova Scotia's population grew by 2.3% whereas it rose by 3.0% between 1981 and 1986.

The rate of growth of Quebec's population fell by half during the last three intercensal periods. Between 1971 and 1976, Quebec's population grew by 206,681 people (or 3.4%) whereas during the 1981-1986 period, its population grew by only 101,873 (or 1.6%).

After a decline in population growth from 7.3% (between 1971 and 1976) to 4.4% (between 1976 and 1981), Ontario's growth in population increased to 5.7% during the 1981 to 1986 period.

The Prairie provinces have been characterized by fairly dramatic swings in population change since the 1971 Census. In Manitoba, population growth was well below the national average during the 1971-1976 and 1976-1981 periods. In fact, during the latter period, the growth rate was only 0.5% (or 4,735 people). However, during the 1981-1986 intercensal period, the 4.4% (44,991 people) growth of Manitoba's population was above the national average of 4.2%.

Between 1971 and 1976, Saskatchewan's population actually declined by 0.5% (-4,919 people) but has since recovered to experience growth rates of 5.1% and 4.3% during the 1976-1981 and 1981-1986 intercensal periods.

Since 1971, Alberta has consistently experienced population growth well above the national average. In the two intercensal periods between 1971 and 1981, its population grew first by 12.9% and then by a dramatic 21.7%. This growth has moderated to 6.1% since 1981 and, while this is still well above the 4.2% population growth of the nation, the absolute growth in population has fallen from 399,687 (1976-1981) to 137,554 (1981-1986).

British Columbia experienced population growth similar to that of Alberta during the 1971-1986 period. Between 1971 and 1976, British Columbia's population grew by 12.9% and then by a further 11.3% between 1976 and 1981. These represent absolute population increases of 281,987 and

Table 2. Population Change by Province and Territory in Canada, 1971-1986

Province	Population				Percentage change		
	1971	1976	1981	1986	1971/76	1976/81	1981/86
Newfoundland	522,104	557,725	567,681	568,349	6.8	1.8	0.1
Prince Edward Island	111,641	118,229	122,506	126,646	5.9	3.6	3.4
Nova Scotia	788,960	828,571	847,442	873,199	5.0	2.3	3.0
New Brunswick	634,557	677,250	696,403	710,422	6.7	2.8	2.0
Quebec	6,027,764	6,234,445	6,438,403	6,540,276	3.4	3.3	1.6
Ontario	7,703,106	8,264,465	8,625,107	9,113,515	7.3	4.4	5.7
Manitoba	988,247	1,021,506	1,026,241	1,071,232	3.4	0.5	4.4
Saskatchewan	926,242	921,323	968,313	1,010,198	-0.5	5.1	4.3
Alberta	1,627,874	1,838,037	2,237,724	2,375,278	12.9	21.7	6.1
British Columbia	2,184,621	2,466,608	2,744,467	2,889,207	12.9	11.3	5.3
Yukon	18,388	21,836	23,153	23,504	18.7	6.0	1.5
Northwest Territories	34,807	42,609	45,741	52,238	22.4	7.3	14.2
Canada	21,568,311	22,992,604	24,343,181	25,354,064 <sup>1</sup>	6.6	5.9	4.2

<sup>1</sup> Includes data for incompletely enumerated Indian reserves and Indian settlements.

Source:

1971 to 1986 Censuses of Canada.

277,859 respectively. However, between 1981 and 1986, population growth in British Columbia was only 5.3% or 144,740 people.

Although the population growth in the **Northwest Territories** has been strong and consistently above the national average since 1971, **Yukon** has seen a marked slow-down since 1981. After increases of 18.7% and 6.0% in the 1971-1976 and 1976-1981 intercensal periods, Yukon's population grew by only 1.5% (351 people) between 1981 and 1986.

Overall, the population of Canada continues to grow and this growth is most pronounced in the West. Nevertheless, since 1981, the rate of growth has declined in most regions of Canada and most notably in the West where the recession of the early 1980s and falling commodity prices have been felt the most.

### "North of the Border"

Even a casual examination of a map of Canada reveals that, within Canada's vast land expanse, most people live in a relatively narrow band hugging Canada's border with the United States of America.

But exactly what proportion of the Canadian population lives close to the Canada-United States border? What proportion lives "north of 60°" and have these proportions changed significantly in the last 15 years?

To address these questions, a number of geographic zones have been created using selected parallels of latitude ( $49^{\circ}$ ,  $54^{\circ}$  and  $60^{\circ}$ ) and distances (150, 300 and 600 km) from the Canada-United States border (excluding Alaska).

The parallels of latitude selected divide Canada into four distinct bands. They are:

- (1) the area south of the  $49^{\circ}$  parallel, comprising much of Eastern Canada;
- (2) the area between the  $49^{\circ}$  and  $54^{\circ}$  parallels, comprising much of the southern portions of Western Canada;
- (3) the area between the  $54^{\circ}$  and  $60^{\circ}$  parallels, comprising what is sometimes referred to as the "mid-North"; and
- (4) the area north of the  $60^{\circ}$  parallel, often called "the North".

**Table 3. Geographic Distribution of the Canadian Population Within Selected Parallels of Latitude and Distances from the Canada-United States Border, 1971-1986**

Selected parallels of latitude	1971		1976		1981		1986	
	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%
South of $49^{\circ}$	15,641,591	72.5	16,533,820	71.9	17,170,718	70.5	17,827,382 <sup>1</sup>	70.4
Between $49^{\circ}$ and $54^{\circ}$	5,477,783	25.4	5,969,358	26.0	6,611,115	27.2	6,898,501 <sup>1</sup>	27.3
Between $54^{\circ}$ and $60^{\circ}$	394,224	1.8	423,442	1.8	490,512	2.0	505,222 <sup>1</sup>	2.0
North of $60^{\circ}$	54,713	0.3	65,984	0.3	70,836	0.3	78,226	0.3
<b>Canada</b>	<b>21,568,311</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>22,992,604</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>24,343,181</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>25,354,064</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Selected distances north of Canada - U.S.A. border	1971		1976		1981		1986	
	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%
0 - 150 km	15,589,086	72.3	16,608,383	72.2	17,412,018	71.5	18,218,596 <sup>1</sup>	72.0
151 - 300 km	2,919,041	13.5	3,093,119	13.4	3,321,873	13.7	3,394,247 <sup>1</sup>	13.4
301 - 600 km	2,167,799	10.1	2,314,281	10.1	2,558,183	10.5	2,630,864 <sup>1</sup>	10.4
Over 600 km	892,385	4.1	976,821	4.3	1,051,107	4.3	1,065,624 <sup>1</sup>	4.2
<b>Canada</b>	<b>21,568,311</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>22,992,604</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>24,343,181</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>25,354,064</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>1</sup> Excludes data for incompletely enumerated Indian reserves and Indian settlements. On some Indian reserves and settlements in the 1986 Census, enumeration was not permitted or was interrupted before it could be completed. While it was not possible to estimate the population of each incompletely enumerated reserve or settlement, estimates of the population living in these areas were made for each province affected and for Canada.

**Source:**  
1971 to 1986 Censuses of Canada, unpublished data.

Table 3 reveals that although the population of "the North" has increased by a healthy 43.0% (from 54,713 to 78,226 people), its share of Canada's total population has remained unchanged at 0.3%. Similarly, a 28.2% increase (from 394,224 to 505,222 people) in the "mid-North" has only increased its share from 1.8% to 2.0% during this 15-year period.

Even in the two southern bands, the shares have not changed significantly and the changes reflect more the westward shift in Canada's population than a distinct northward shift. The share of Canada's population living south of 49° declined by about 2 percentage points (from 72.5% to 70.4%) between 1971 and 1986 whereas the share living in the area between 49° and 54° increased by about 2 percentage points (from 25.4% to 27.3%) during this period.

This shift slowed almost to a standstill between 1981 and 1986, reflecting the slow-down in the rapid growth of the population of Western Canada.

In 1986, almost three-quarters (72.0%) of Canadians lived within a two-hour car drive (150 km) of the United States border (excluding Alaska) and 95.8% of the population was only a day's drive away (within 600 km). This situation has changed very little since 1971 when 72.3% of Canadians lived within 150 km of the United States.

On the other hand, the total number of Canadians living 151 to 600 km from the border increased by 938,271 between 1971 and 1986, although the percentage increase was only from 23.6% to 23.8%. The number of Canadians living more than 600 km from the border increased by 173,239 between 1971 and 1986. However, in 1986, 4.2% of Canada's population lived in this area, virtually unchanged from 4.1% of the population in 1971.



## SUBPROVINCIAL POPULATION DISTRIBUTION AND CHANGE IN CANADA

### Big City or Small Town?

Canada's total population is distributed throughout its 6,009 **municipalities**. Some are cities, others are towns, villages, hamlets, townships, rural municipalities, Indian reserves, etc. All are **administrative areas** defined by federal, provincial or territorial authorities and census data are available for each one.

These municipalities range in population from over 1 million to less than 100. Do Canadians live mainly in small towns or large cities and has this changed much since 1981?

By 1986, almost one-half (49.3%) of Canada's population lived in municipalities of 50,000 people or more, while approximately another one-third (30.2%) lived in municipalities of 5,000 to 50,000 inhabitants. The remaining one-fifth (20.5%) lived in municipalities of less than 5,000 inhabitants. The corresponding proportions for 1981 were 48.1%, 30.2% and 21.7% respectively. It is in the largest and

smallest size groups where the greatest population changes have occurred.

Table 4 illustrates that, between 1981 and 1986, the number of people living in municipalities with over 50,000 inhabitants increased by 6.6% and the population living in municipalities of 5,000 to 50,000 people rose by 4.0%. On the other hand, the number of people living in municipalities of less than 5,000 inhabitants actually **declined** by 2.0%. These figures compare with a national growth of 4.2%.

Forgetting for the moment about these administrative areas, Statistics Canada defines about 940 urban areas in Canada. These **statistical areas** are defined as continuously built-up areas having a population concentration of 1,000 or more and a population density of 400 or more people per square kilometre. What size of urban area do Canadians favour?

**Table 4.** Population Change, by Municipal Size Group, Canada, 1981 and 1986

Population size group	1981		1986		Population change	Percentage change
	Number of municipalities	Population	Number of municipalities	Population		
Less than 5,000	5057	5,289,062	5332	5,183,954	-105,108	-2.0
5,000 to 49,999	578	7,352,330	599	7,646,668	294,338	4.0
50,000 and over	75	11,701,789	78	12,478,709	776,920	6.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5710</b>	<b>24,343,181</b>	<b>6009</b>	<b>25,309,331<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>966,150</b>	<b>4.0</b>

<sup>1</sup> Excludes data for incompletely enumerated Indian reserves and Indian settlements.

**Source:**

1981 and 1986 Censuses of Canada.

In 1986, just over three-quarters (i.e. 19,352,085) of Canadians lived in these 940 urban areas. Of these urbanites, fully 75% lived in urban areas having 50,000 or more inhabitants and another 17.6% lived in urban areas of between 5,000 and 50,000 population. Only 7.4% of urbanites lived in urban areas of less than 5,000 people.

As with smaller municipalities, the population in small urban areas (i.e. less than 5,000 inhabitants) actually declined by 3.3% between 1981 and 1986. In the urban size group of 5,000 to 50,000 people, there was a 4.5% increase in population during this five-year period and in the largest size group (over 50,000 people) there was a 4.6% increase (see Table 5).

Either way you look at it, more Canadians lived in large places in 1986 than in 1981.

### **City Folks and Country Folks**

Between 1871 and 1971, the proportion of the Canadian population living in urban areas continuously increased - from 19.6% to 76.1% (see Chart 2). However, during the 1971 to 1981 period, this urban proportion dropped slightly to 75.7%. Some observers wondered if this was the beginning of an urban decline or a stabilizing of the urban/rural proportions. The results of the 1986 Census suggest it is probably the latter. Between 1981 and 1986, the rural proportion of the population declined from 24.3% to 23.5%, and conversely the urban proportion increased from 75.7% to 76.5%. This was a bigger shift, in five years, than the shift in the previous 10-year period that caused the earlier speculation.

Across Canada, the urban-rural composition of the provinces and territories varies. Chart 3 shows that, in the Atlantic provinces, urbanization is much less pronounced than in any other region of Canada. Prince Edward Island, with 38.1% urban, is the least urbanized of all the provinces; however, it is the most densely populated province in Canada with a density of 22.4 persons per square kilometre.

On the other hand, Ontario is the most urbanized province (82.1% urban) followed by Alberta (79.4%), British Columbia (79.3%) and Quebec (77.9%).

It is interesting to note the variations in the urban-rural composition of Yukon and Northwest Territories. In the Yukon, almost two-thirds of the population is concentrated in one urban area (Whitehorse) whereas in the Northwest Territories, less than one half of the population is found in six urban areas and the majority of the population lives in small rural communities.

Canada's urban and rural populations are found both within census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and census agglomerations (CAs) and outside these areas (see Chart 4). A CMA or CA is an urban centred region comprised of a large urbanized core together with adjacent urban and rural fringe areas having a high degree of economic and social integration with that core. CMAs and CAs differ only in that the population of urbanized cores is less in CAs than in CMAs.

In 1986, three-quarters (75.9%) of Canada's population lived in CMAs and CAs. Between 1981 and 1986, the population of CMAs and CAs grew by 5.1% compared with the 4.2% growth of Canada as a whole.

**Table 5. Population Change by Urban Size Group, Canada, 1981 and 1986**

Population size group	1981		1986		Population change	Percentage change
	Number of urban areas	Population <sup>1</sup>	Number of urban areas	Population		
Less than 5,000	666	1,482,237	655	1,432,674	-49,563	-3.3
5,000 to 49,999	242	3,263,195	244	3,409,129	145,934	4.5
50,000 and over	38	13,869,703	41	14,510,282	640,579	4.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>946</b>	<b>18,615,135</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>19,352,085<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>736,950</b>	<b>4.0</b>

<sup>1</sup> Based on the 1986 area.

<sup>2</sup> Excludes data for incompletely enumerated Indian reserves and Indian settlements.

Of the 1986 population in CMAs and CAs, 88.3% lived in the urbanized cores, about 2.2% in urban fringe areas and the remaining 9.5% in the rural fringes. These figures compare with 1981 distributions of 88.9%, 2.1% and 9.0% respectively.

On the other hand, in those areas outside CMAs and CAs, more than two-thirds (67.8%) of the population lived in rural areas in 1986 compared to 67.4% in 1981.

As was the case during the 1976-1981 period, most of the growth in the rural population of Canada between 1981 and 1986 occurred in the rural areas of CMAs and CAs.

Table 6 illustrates that, between 1981 and 1986, growth in the rural population outside CMAs and CAs was only 1.2% (50,021 people) whereas within the rural parts of Canada's CMAs and CAs, the population increased by 10.9% (179,179 people).

Although the absolute population increase was greatest in the urbanized cores, it is in the urban and rural fringes of Canada's CMAs and CAs that the rate of population growth was most pronounced during the years 1981 to 1986. This is a continuation of the fringe area growth observed during the 1976-1981 period.

**Table 6. Urban and Rural Population Composition, Inside and Outside CMAs and CAs, Canada, 1981 and 1986**

	1981 <sup>1</sup>	1986	Percentage change
<b>CANADA</b>	<b>24,343,181</b>	<b>25,354,064</b>	<b>4.2</b>
Inside CMAs/CAs	18,291,480	19,215,107 <sup>2</sup>	5.1
Urbanized core	16,260,705	16,969,758	4.4
Urban fringe	381,781	417,176	9.3
Rural fringe	1,648,994	1,828,173	10.9
Outside CMAs/CAs	6,051,701	6,094,224 <sup>2</sup>	0.7
Urban	1,972,649	1,965,151	-0.4
Rural	4,079,052	4,129,073	1.2

<sup>1</sup> Based on the 1986 area.

<sup>2</sup> Excludes data for incompletely enumerated Indian reserves and Indian settlements.

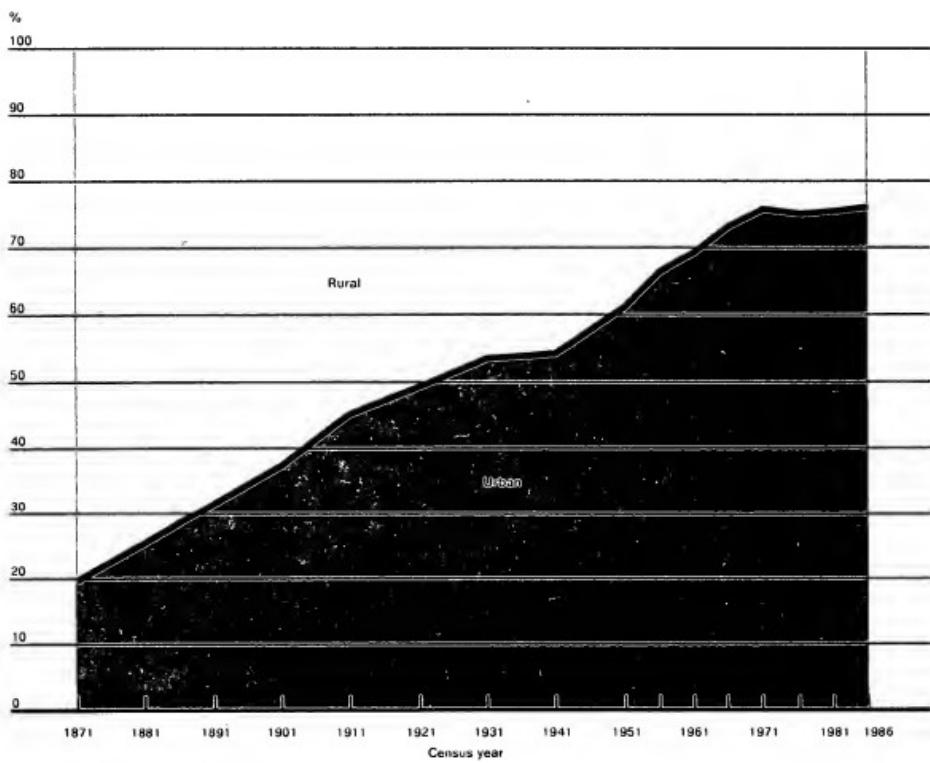
**Source:**

1986 Census of Canada.

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**Chart 2. Urban-Rural Population Composition of Canada, 1871-1986**

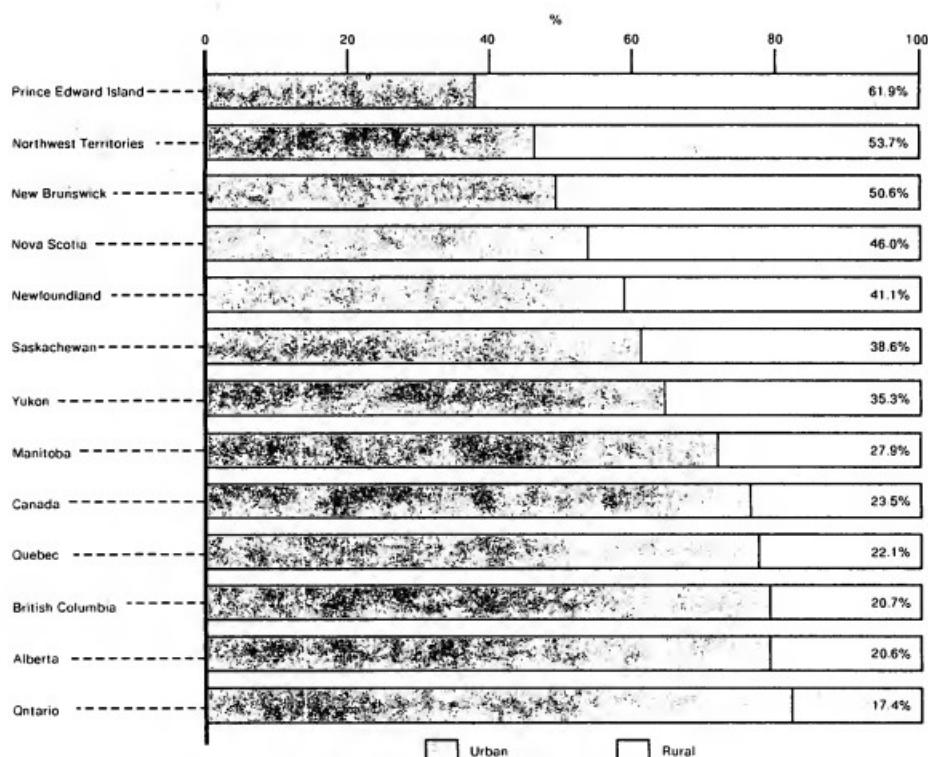
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**Source:**  
1871 to 1986 Censuses of Canada.

**Chart 3. Urban-Rural Population Composition, for Canada, Provinces and Territories, 1986**

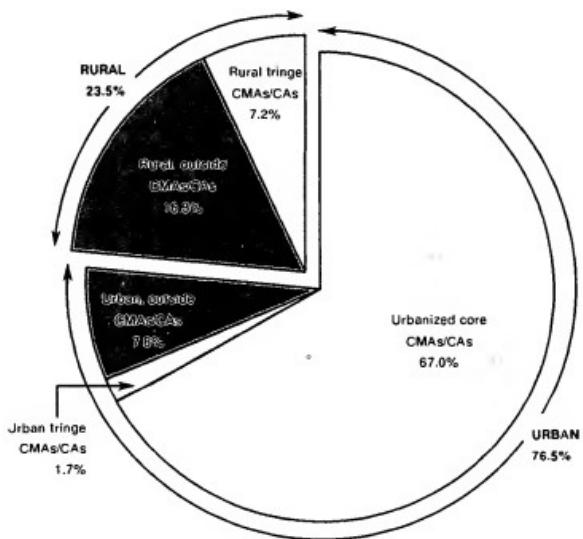


Source:  
1986 Census of Canada.

Chart 4.

## Canada's Urban-Rural Population Composition, Inside and Outside CMAs and CAs, 1986

- Within CMAs/CAs 75.8%
- Outside CMAs/CAs 24.1%



**Urbanized core:** The large urban area around which a CMA or CA is delineated. The urbanized core must have a population (based on the previous census) of at least 10,000 in the case of a CA or 100,000 in the case of a CMA.

**Urban fringe:** An urban area within a CMA or CA, but outside of the urbanized core.

**Rural fringe:** All territory within a CMA or CA lying outside of urban areas.

**Source:**  
1986 Census of Canada.

# 3

## CANADA'S MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS AND MUNICIPALITIES

**O**f Canada's 25 census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and the 144 municipalities with more than 25,000 people, which ones are the largest and which grew or declined the most between 1981 and 1986?

### Census Metropolitan Areas

In 1986, almost 60% of Canada's population lived in its 25 CMAs (see Chart 5). However, this population occupied only 72,378 square kilometres or approximately 0.8% of Canada's total 9.2 million square kilometre land area. The land area of CMAs varies widely between a high of 11,400 square kilometres in Edmonton to a low of only 825 square kilometres in Kitchener (see Table 7).

In 1986, Canada's five most populous CMAs were Toronto (3,427,168), Montréal (2,921,357), Vancouver (1,380,729), Ottawa-Hull (819,263) and Edmonton (785,465). Together they accounted for 37.0% of Canada's population. Saint John, with 121,265 people, was Canada's least populous CMA.

In terms of percentage growth, Saskatoon was the leader among Canada's CMAs with a growth of 14.6% between 1981 and 1986. Ottawa-Hull ranked second (10.1%) followed by Toronto (9.5%), Oshawa (9.2%) and Vancouver (8.9%). Only in the Sudbury CMA did the population actually decline (-4.6%) during this period. In the Calgary and Edmonton CMAs, the dramatic growth rates of 25.7% and 18.1% respectively during the 1976-1981 period fell to 7.2% and 6.0% between 1981 and 1986.

In terms of absolute population increase, the top five CMAs were Toronto (296,776), Vancouver (112,546), Ottawa-Hull (75,442), Montréal (59,071) and Calgary (45,360).

### Municipalities

Of the 6,009 municipalities (cities, towns, villages, etc.) in Canada, only 144 (2.4%) had a population in excess of 25,000 in 1986. Montréal

was the only municipality with over 1 million people (1,015,420). Calgary, with a population of 636,104, became Canada's second largest municipality in 1986, overtaking Toronto (612,289) (see Table 8).

When one examines the rates of growth of these 144 municipalities, the strongest growth is found to occur in the suburban municipalities surrounding Canada's major centres (see Chart 6). For example, with a growth of over 35,000 people, Vaughan, Ontario, near Toronto, more than doubled its population (+119.2%) between 1981 and 1986. Cumberland, Ontario, just east of Ottawa, ranked a distant second with a growth rate of 66.9%. In fact, 19 of the 20 fastest growing municipalities are located within CMAs.

Of the 20 fastest growing municipalities in Canada, 14 were located in Ontario and the remainder were in British Columbia (3), Quebec (2) and Nova Scotia (1).

Of those 31 municipalities with a population of 25,000 or more that experienced declining populations, most were found within the central areas of CMAs and CAs as well as in resource-based or one industry-based regions. Of these 31 municipalities, 16 were located in Quebec, another 10 in Ontario, two in Nova Scotia and one each in Newfoundland, New Brunswick and British Columbia. Chart 7 shows that Sept-Îles, Quebec, experienced the largest percentage decline (-12.4%) followed by Lachine, near Montréal (-7.0%), Sydney, Nova Scotia (-5.8%), Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, Quebec (-5.5%) and Saint John, New Brunswick (-5.1%).

In 1986, 113 municipalities having a population of 25,000 or more experienced population growth. In terms of absolute population growth, the top five gainers were Mississauga (58,949), Calgary (43,296), Scarborough (41,323), Brampton (39,468) and Markham (37,560). The top five losers were Montréal-Nord, Quebec (-4,611); Saint John, New Brunswick (-4,134); Sept-Îles, Quebec (-3,625); Saint-Léonard, Quebec (-3,482) and North York, Ontario (-3,224).

Table 7. Census Metropolitan Areas, Population, Canada, 1981 and 1986

Rank 1986	Census metropolitan area	1981 population <sup>1</sup>	1986 population	Percentage change 1981-1986	Land area, 1986 in square kilometers
1	Toronto, Ontario	3,130,392A	3,427,168	9.5	5 613.71
2	Montréal, Quebec	2,862,286A	2,921,3572	2.1	3 508.59
3	Vancouver, British Columbia	1,268,183	1,380,729	8.9	2 786.26
4	Ottawa-Hull, Ont.-Que.	743,821A	819,263	10.1	5 138.34
5	Edmonton, Alberta	740,882A	785,465 <sup>2</sup>	6.0	11 396.68
6	Calgary, Alberta	625,966A	671,326 <sup>2</sup>	7.2	5 055.96
7	Winnipeg, Manitoba	592,061A	625,304	5.6	3 294.82
8	Québec, Quebec	583,820A	603,267	3.3	3 150.27
9	Hamilton, Ontario	542,095	557,029	2.8	1 358.50
10	St. Catharines-Niagara, Ontario	342,645A	343,258	0.2	1 399.80
11	London, Ontario	326,817A	342,302	4.7	2 105.07
12	Kitchener, Ontario	287,801	311,195	8.1	823.64
13	Halifax, Nova Scotia	277,727	295,990	6.6	2 508.10
14	Victoria, British Columbia	241,450A	255,547 <sup>2</sup>	5.8	1 951.11
15	Windsor, Ontario	250,885A	253,988	1.2	861.66
16	Oshawa, Ontario	186,446A	203,543	9.2	894.19
17	Saskatoon, Saskatchewan	175,058A	200,665	14.6	4 749.35
18	Regina, Saskatchewan	173,226A	186,521	7.7	3 421.58
19	St. John's, Newfoundland	154,835A	161,901	4.6	1 129.99
20	Chicoutimi-Jonquière, Quebec	158,229A	158,468	0.2	1 723.31
21	Sudbury, Ontario	156,121A	148,877	-4.6	2 612.11
22	Sherbrooke, Quebec	125,183A	129,960	3.8	915.75
23	Trois-Rivières, Quebec	125,343A	128,888	2.8	871.91
24	Thunder Bay, Ontario	121,948A	122,217	0.2	2 202.55
25	Saint John, New Brunswick	121,012A	121,265	0.2	2 904.80
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>14,314,232A</b>	<b>15,155,493</b>	<b>5.9%</b>	<b>72 378.35</b>

A Adjusted figures due to boundary changes.

1 Based on the 1986 area.

2 Excludes population of one or more incompletely enumerated Indian reserves or Indian settlements.

**Source:**

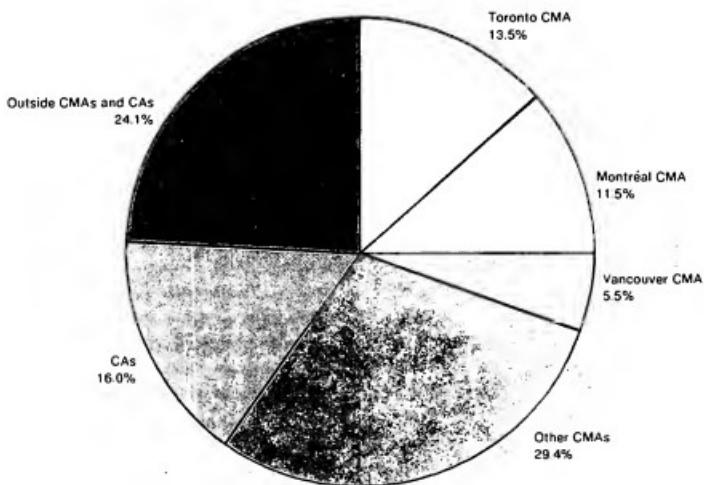
1986 Census of Canada.

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Chart 5.

Percentage Population Distribution, Inside and Outside CMAs and CAs, Canada, 1986

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Source:  
1986 Census of Canada.

**Table 8. Canada's Twenty-five Largest Municipalities, Population, 1986**

Rank	Municipality	1986 population	Percentage change, 1981-1986 <sup>1</sup>
1	Montréal, V, Quebec	1,015,420	-0.3
2	Calgary, C, Alberta	636,104	7.3
3	Toronto, C, Ontario	612,289	2.2
4	Winnipeg, C, Manitoba	594,551	5.3
5	Edmonton, C, Alberta	573,982	5.9
6	North York, C, Ontario	556,297	-0.6
7	Scarborough, C, Ontario	484,676	9.3
8	Vancouver, C, British Columbia	431,147	4.2
9	Mississauga, C, Ontario	374,005	18.7
10	Hamilton, C, Ontario	306,728	0.1
11	Etobicoke, C, Ontario	302,973	1.4
12	Ottawa, C, Ontario	300,763	1.9
13	Laval, V, Quebec	284,164	5.9
14	London, C, Ontario	269,140	5.8
15	Windsor, C, Ontario	193,111	0.5
16	Brampton, C, Ontario	188,498	26.5
17	Surrey, DM, British Columbia	181,447	23.3
18	Saskatoon, C, Saskatchewan	177,641	15.2
19	Regina, C, Saskatchewan	175,064	7.4
20	Québec, V, Quebec	164,580	-0.8
21	Kitchener, C, Ontario	150,604	7.8
22	Burnaby, DM, British Columbia	145,161	6.3
23	York, C, Ontario	135,401	0.6
24	Longueuil, V, Quebec	125,441	0.9
25	Oshawa, C, Ontario	123,651	5.2

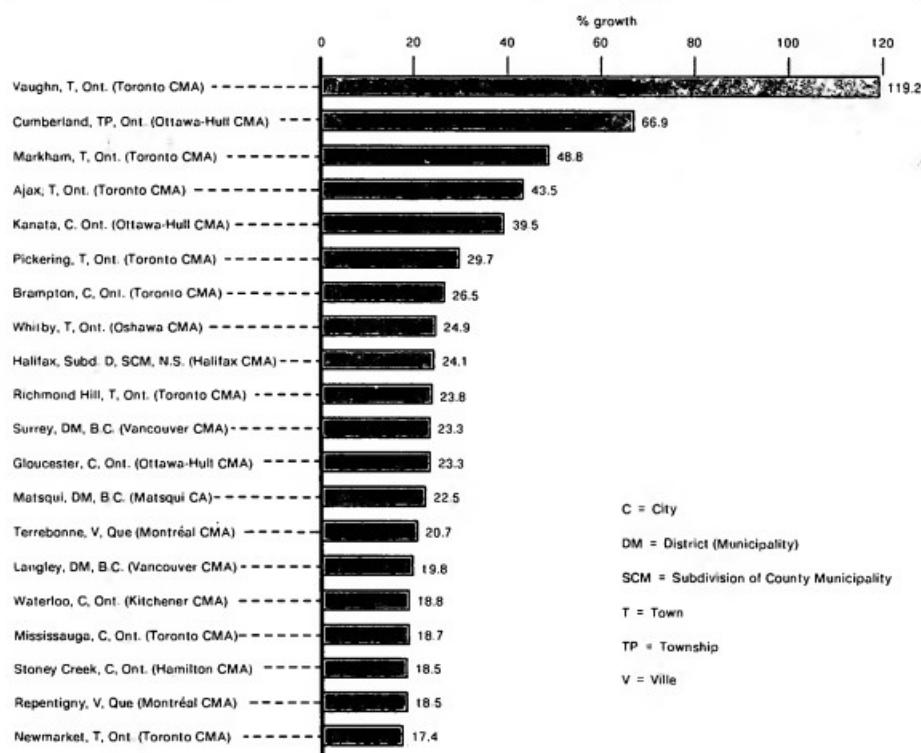
Note: V = Ville; C = City; DM = District (Municipality).

<sup>1</sup> Based on the 1986 area.

**Source:**

1986 Census of Canada.

**Chart 6. Major Municipal Population Winners, Canada, 1981-1986**

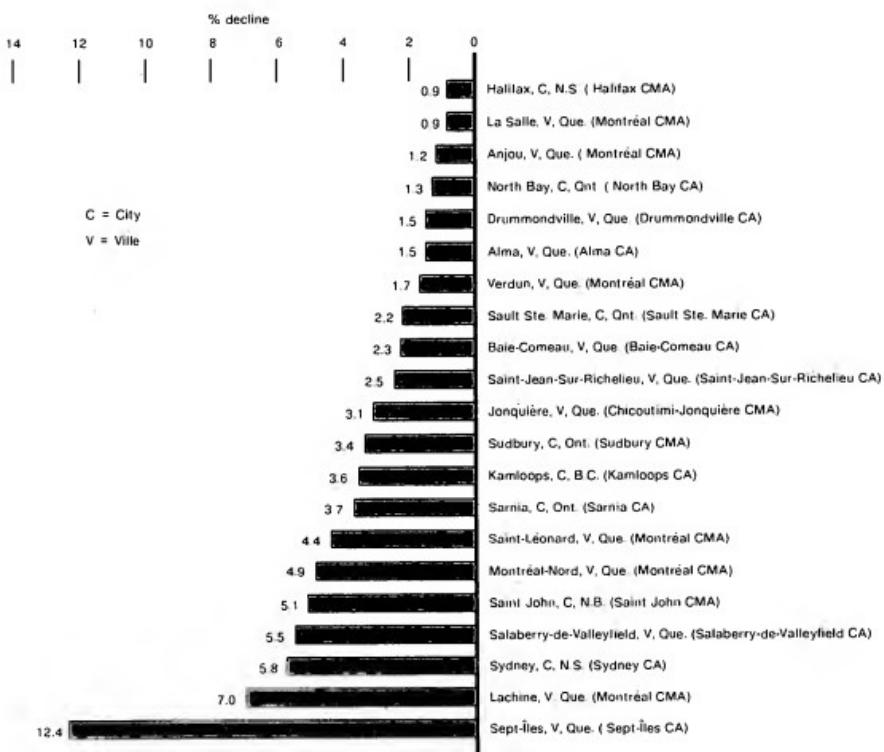


Note: C = City; SCM = Subdivision of County Municipality; TP = Township; DM = District (Municipality); T = Town; V = Ville.

Source:

1986 Census of Canada.

**Chart 7. Major Municipal Population Losers, Canada, 1981-1986**



**Source:**  
1986 Census of Canada.

## **CONCLUSION**

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**T**he distribution and change of population have widespread implications on public policy. This report has provided an overview of the geographic distribution of Canada's population in 1986. As well, it has described how this distribution has changed, not only since Canada's Confederation, but particularly over the past few years.

Results of the 1986 Census have revealed that, between 1981 and 1986, the intercensal rate of growth of Canada's population was the lowest since Confederation. Also, the rapid population growth experienced by Alberta and British Columbia during the late 1970s and early 1980s has moderated substantially between 1981 and 1986.

During the 1981 to 1986 period, the historic trend toward an increasingly urban population has re-emerged after a slight decline in the urban proportion between 1971 and 1981. Furthermore, fewer Canadians live in small municipalities and small urban areas, and most population growth in rural areas continues to occur within the boundaries of major metropolitan areas.



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